

Sustainable Development Through People's Participation in Resource Management

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) is conducting a research programme on 'Sustainable Development through People's Participation in Resource Management', which is designed to address issues raised by the current debate on sustainable development. It builds upon the Institute's earlier work on participation in development, which defined such participation as 'the organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control'.

The current research seeks to contribute to an understanding, not only of the ways in which local individuals contribute to the success of conservation projects funded by outside donors, but also of the ways in which people take sustainable development into their own hands — either by working to maintain their traditionally sustainable resource management systems, or by acting to resist projects or policies which will adversely affect their livelihood by degrading the environment. Reports have already been published of studies conducted in Ethiopia, Tanzania, northern Mexico, and India, while studies are under way in southern Mexico, Sudan, northeastern Tanzania, the African drylands, the Philippines, Ghana, Solomon Islands, Senegal, the Himalayas, Brazil, and the Amazon region.

As part of the research programme, a survey of literature is currently being conducted on 'grassroots' participation in environmental conservation or sustainable resource management projects in developing countries. Specifically, information on case-studies is being gathered under the following broad categories:

- 1) Resistance to, and popular movements to counter, environmentally destructive, externally-planned infrastructure, including unsuitable commercial or development projects;
- 2) 'Grassroots' participation in conservation projects initiated from within or outside the local community; and

- 3) Traditional/indigenous natural resource management systems that are threatened by internal or external factors, but could be successfully adapted for present-day use.

Cross-referenced key words or phrases include *agroforestry, deforestation, desertification, indigenous technology, irrigation, resource-use study, social equality, soil erosion, urban environment, vulnerable groups, and women.*

The above research is being undertaken in coordination with related UNRISD research on the environment. The 'Social Dynamics of Deforestation' programme includes national and regional analysis of the implications of deforestation for the livelihood and living conditions of poverty groups in urban and rural areas. Individual, family, and group, reactions and strategies to combat the adverse effects of environmental degradation are assessed, as are interactions with other key factors such as agencies of the state, modern commercial interests, non-governmental organizations, and 'grassroots' movements.

The UNRISD research programme on 'Women, Environment, and Population' is conducting micro-level empirical research to investigate the relationships of different forms of environmental degradation with women's time-use patterns and activities, as well as with morbidity and mortality, and with fertility and migration decisions. Studies are under way in Kenya, Malaysia, and Mexico.

Inquiries about the 'Sustainable Development and People's Participation in Resource Management' case-studies, UNRISD research programmes, and available publications, should be addressed to the undersigned:

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Scientists' Institute for Public Information: Global Change Program

We live on an interconnected, interdependent, living planet. Events taking place in one part of the world affect people living thousands of kilometres away. In no other time has this fact been as evident as in the 20th century, with its advances in communications technology and ever-increasing human population and enlightenment.

In recent years, the survival of our planet has attracted the attention of policymakers, the media and, increasingly, the public. In order to make informed decisions about appropriate technologies, natural resource management, and the future of the planet, the public relies primarily on the media for increased awareness and understanding of these intricate scientific issues.

Without access to accurate, truly scientific information, the media cannot present a reliable picture of these often controversial issues. SIPI's *Media Outreach Program on Global Change* provides journalists with greater access to scientific expertise in an effort to help them inform the public more accurately than hitherto about our changing environment.

The primary components of the Global Change Program are the International Hot-line and Global Change Media Briefings.

International Hot-line

In 1980, SIPI began operating the Media Resource Service (MRS), a free referral service for journalists who need information sources in science, technology, medicine, and the environment. The International Hot-line, begun in 1989, is an extension of this service, providing assistance to environmental reporters world-wide.

Journalists can call the Hot-line by reversing the charges, faxing their inquiries, or contacting their US bureaus. A brief description of the story which the journalist is working on, the desired locale of the expert(s), languages spoken, and their deadline, will provide guidelines for a staff person to search the data-base for appropriate experts. When once the experts are identified, the staff person provides the journalist with names, affiliations, and telephone/fax numbers.

In addition to US and Canadian environmental experts, scientists from over 45 countries — including developing and industrialized countries, and representing government, academia, and non-governmental organizations — have agreed to respond to media inquiries on a broad range of environmental topics ranging from air pollution to water quality, and from land erosion to marine pollution.